

U.S. Small Business Administration



NEWS

# RELEASE

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## *SBA ADMINISTRATOR ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVES TO HELP NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES*

WASHINGTON - Aída Alvarez, Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), today announced several new initiatives aimed at enhancing Native American participation in the agency's entrepreneurial development programs.

"The SBA is committed to building better understanding and more solid working relationships between tribal governments and private industry," Administrator Alvarez said. "That's why I am announcing several new SBA initiatives aimed at enhancing our presence in and relationship with the Native American community. These new initiatives will help Native Americans succeed in small business and build their communities."

The new initiatives include:

- A \$700,000 enhancement of the Tribal Business Information Center Program that will cover operating expenses for counseling and training. The centers will provide one-on-one technical assistance to tribal entrepreneurs, as well as HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Opportunity training. They will also facilitate relationships between tribal reservations and SBA's district offices, banks, and other local community business resources.
- Native American Procurement Initiative. This initiative will target contracting assistance to reservation-based Native American firms to help them access federal contracting opportunities.

- A study to evaluate the business practices of Native American small business owners in North and South Dakota. Information from the study will help the agency better serve these and other tribal communities.
- Establishment of a Native American National Advisory Committee at the SBA. This committee will advise SBA program managers on how they can better serve the Native American community. The committee will also encourage Native American participation in the agency's Welfare-to-Work program.

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- Expansion of SBA's Office of Native American Affairs. Administrator Alvarez announced the appointment of Rhonda Whiting as program manager to implement the agency's new initiatives for the Native American community. Ms. Whiting comes to the SBA with extensive experience in Native American issues and is herself a Native American from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of Montana.

The announcement came at this week's "Building Economic Self-Determination in Indian Communities" conference. The two-day conference is an inter-agency effort to develop strategies for building strong economic and business opportunities for Native American communities.

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*The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of business loans, loan guarantees and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, the SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, the SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than one million small business owners. The SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.*

*America's 23 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.*

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